REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated December 28, 2005. Claims 1 to 8, 13, 14, 16 and 33 to 44 are pending in the application, with Claims 38 to 44 having been newly-added. Claims 1, 13, 14, 16, 33, 36 and 37 are the independent claims herein. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 to 6, 8, 13, 14, 16 and 33 to 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Without conceding the correctness of the rejections, the claims have been amended to more clearly recite the claimed subject matter. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 112 rejections are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3 to 7, 14, 16 and 33 to 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,119,108 (Holmes) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,460,076 (Srinivasan), Claim 2 was rejected under § 103(a) over Holmes in view of Srinivasan and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,021,492 (May), Claim 8 was rejected under § 103(a) over Holmes in view of Srinivasan and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,337,357 (Chou), and Claim 13 was rejected under § 103(a) over Holmes in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,073,124 (Krishnan) and Srinivasan. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns adding/embedding information (e.g., personal identification information of a user) to an image. According to the invention, identification information is input to an image processing apparatus and the information is stored in a memory. The identification information stored in the memory is added to the image in a manner not easily recognizable to human eyes. However, prior to adding the information, it is discriminated whether the image is a predetermined type of image (e.g., a

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banknote or other valuable paper) and the addition of the identification information is controlled based on this determination. As a result, if the image is not the predetermined type of image, the personal information of the user is not added, thereby preventing the unnecessary exposure of the user's personal information to unauthorized sources.

With specific reference to the claims, amended independent Claim 1 is an image processing apparatus which is connected with an information communication apparatus, comprising first input means for entering identification information on an addressee of fee billing from the information communication apparatus, memory control means for storing the identification information entered by the first input means in a memory, second input means for entering an image, addition means for adding the identification information stored in the memory by the memory control means to the image entered by the second input means in a manner not easily recognizable to human eyes, discrimination means for discriminating whether the image is a predetermined type of image, control means for controlling the addition by the addition means based on the result of discrimination by the discrimination means, output means for outputting the image to which the identification information is added by the addition means, and deletion means for deleting the identification information from the memory after the addition means adds the identification information to the entered image.

Amended independent Claims 13, 14 and 16 are system, method and computer readable medium claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 1.

Amended independent Claim 33 includes features along the lines of Claim 1, but is more specifically directed to an image processing apparatus comprising image input means for entering an image, information input means for entering predetermined information to be embedded in the image entered by the image input means, memory

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control means for storing the predetermined information entered by the information input means in a memory, inquiry means for inquiring to an external device whether the predetermined information stored in the memory by the memory control means is effective, embedding means for embedding the stored predetermined information into the entered image if the inquiry means identifies that the predetermined information is effective, discrimination means for discriminating whether the image is a predetermined type of image, control means for controlling the embedding by the embedding means based on the result of discrimination by the discrimination means, and deletion means for deleting the predetermined information from the memory after the embedding means embeds the predetermined information to the entered image.

Amended independent Claims 36 and 37 are method and computer readable medium claims, respectively, that substantially correspond to Claim 33.

The applied art, alone or in any permissible combination, is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of the present invention. In particular, the applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of an image processing apparatus discriminating whether an input image is a predetermined type of image, and controlling the addition (embedding) of identification information of fee billing (predetermined information), which is input to the image processing apparatus from an information communication apparatus, to the image based on a result of the discrimination.

Holmes is merely seen to disclose a system in which, when accepting the purchase of a user access license, the user enters sensitive user information so that a desired electronic object may be downloaded with the sensitive user information from a database. The Office Action again cited column 5, lines 25 to 58 as allegedly disclosing the claimed discrimination means/step. However, as Applicant understands this section, it

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merely teaches that a user provides sensitive information, whereby the sensitive information is added to the document. However, Holmes simply fails to discriminate whether or not an input image is a predetermined type of image, and then performing the addition based on the discrimination result. That is, Holmes adds the information regardless of the type of input image. Accordingly, Holmes is not seen to disclose or to suggest an image processing apparatus discriminating whether an input image is a predetermined type of image, and controlling the addition of identification information of fee billing, which is input to the image processing apparatus from an information communication apparatus, to the image based on a result of the discrimination.

Srinivasan is not seen to add anything to overcome the foregoing deficiencies of Holmes. Srinivasan merely discloses a system for a user to purchase music, video or software over the Internet where the user can pay for the download using a credit card, or an established account. However, Srinivasan is not seen to disclose anything that, when added to Holmes, would have resulted in the feature of an image processing apparatus discriminating whether an input image is a predetermined type of image, and controlling the addition of identification information of fee billing, which is input to the image processing apparatus from an information communication apparatus, to the image based on a result of the discrimination.

May, Chou and Krishnan have all been studied but are not seen to disclose or to suggest anything that would overcome the foregoing deficiencies of Holmes and Srinivasan. More particularly, like Holmes and Srinivasan, May, Chou and Krishnan are not seen to disclose anything that, when added to Holmes and/or Srinivasan, would have resulted in the feature of an image processing apparatus discriminating whether an input image is a predetermined type of image, and controlling the addition of identification
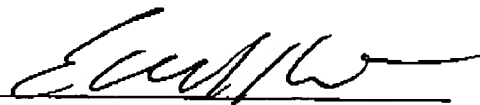
information of fee billing, which is input to the image processing apparatus from an

information communication apparatus, to the image based on a result of the discrimination.

In view of the foregoing, amended independent Claims 1, 13, 14, 16, 33, 36

and 37, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be allowable.

No other matters having been raised, the entire application is believed to be

in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's

earliest convenience.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa,

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